

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02851 061123Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-07 SSM-03 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /080 W
-----061129Z 044323 /23

R 050632Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2954
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2851

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR SY PLO
SUBJ: SHUQAIRY'S COMEBACK

REF: CAIRO 7378

1. SUMMARY: PRES ASAD MET FORMER PLO CHAIRMAN HAMAD SHUQAIRY
MAY 3. PRESS PLAY MADE IT CLEAR SYRIA EMPHASIZING SHUQAIRY'S
ROLE IN PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS RATHER THAN HIS FORMAL POSITION
AS SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF ARAB LEAGUE SYG. EARLIER IN
WEEK SYRIAN PAPER PUBLISHED EXCERPTS OF ARAFAT'S SPEECHES
ON SAME PAGE WITH EDITORIAL BY SHUQAIRY IN WHICH ARAFAT
APPEARED TO COME OUT SECOND BEST. DURING HIS VISIT HERE
SHUQAIRY ALSO MET WITH PNC CHAIRMAN KHALED FAHUM WHO WAS
SHUQAIRY'S PROTEGE AND WELCOMES HIS REEMERGENCE INTO
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PALESTINIAN POLITICS. ATTENTION GIVEN TO FORMER PLO
CHIEFTAIN, WHO DISCREDITED IN EYES OF MOST PALESTINIANS,
SEEMS TO BE PART OF SYRIAN CAMPAIGN TO OFFSET ARAFAT AND
FATAH'S INFLUENCE WITHIN PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT AND CREATE
SYRIAN CONTROLLED ASSETS AMONG PALESTINIANS AS INSURANCE
AGAINST POSSIBLE SYRO-FATAH CONFRONTATION. END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIAN PAPERS MAY 4 PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED PICTURE OF AHMAD SHUQAIRY, FORMER PLO CHAIRMAN, MEETING WITH PRES ASAD. BRIEF ACCOMPANYING CAPTION MADE NO MENTION OF HIS MISSION ON BEHALF OF ARAB LEAGUE SYG RIYADH "TO EVALUATE ARAB LEAGUE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND VISUALIZATION OF ITS FUTURE." (SEE REFTEL), BUT NOTED THAT "AT 10:30 PM YESTERDAY MORNING ASAD RECEIVED AHMAD SHUQAIRY, FORMER CHAIRMAN OF PLO WHO CAME TO REVIEW WITH ASAD THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE WITH ITS LATEST DEVELOPMENTS, AND DEVELOPMENTS OF SITUATION IN THE ARAB REGION, PARTICULARLY REGARDING PALESTINIAN CAUSE."

3. AL-BAATH IN ITS WEEKLY PALESTINE ISSUES PAGE JUXTAPOSED EXCERPTS OF SEVERAL ARAFAT SPEECHES WITH BRIEF EDITORIAL BY SHUQAIRY. ARAFAT REMARKS UNIMPRESSIVE AND DEFENSIVE IN TONE. IN ONE SECTION HE JUSTIFIED PLO POLITICAL EFFORTS ON GROUNDS THAT MILITARY EFFORTS ALONE INSUFFICIENT TO ATTAIN PLO OBJECTIVES ("WE SHOULD HAVE POLITICAL FEDAYEEN"). ALTHOUGH HIS REMARKS COVERED MOST OF THE PAGE, EXCERPTS DID NOT APPEAR CHOSEN TO ENHANCE ARAFAT'S STATURE.

4. IN CONTRAST EDITORIAL BY SHUQAIRY ON SAME PAGE WAS RATHER PUNCHY AND MORE FOCUSED. HE ARGUED THAT:

--TERRITORY OF ANY PALESTINIAN STATE UNLIKELY TO EXCEED 15 PERCENT OF PALESTINIAN HOMELAND;

--SUCH A TERRITORY WOULD NOT POSSESS ECONOMIC OR DEFENSE CAPABILITIES;

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--ISRAEL WOULD NOT MAKE ANY CONCESSIONS OVER ARAB JERUSALEM EXCEPT OF MINOR NATURE;

--SUCH A TERRITORY WOULD BE INSUFFICIENT TO ABSORB PALESTINIANS LIVING OUTSIDE THEIR HOMELAND; AND

--ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH A STATE WOULD REQUIRE MANY CONCESSIONS TO ISRAEL INCLUDING ITS RECOGNITION AND LEGITIMIZING ITS PRESENCE IN "THE PALESTINIAN HOMELAND."

5. HE ASSERTED THAT ARABS IN POSITION TO DEAL FROM STRENGTH WITH THE US, AND WAS AMBIGUOUS ON WHETHER ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORY SUFFICIENT OR JUST FIRST STAGE IN ARAB'S REGAINING ALL OF PALESTINE. HE SAID: "EVEN IF THEY REACH SETTLEMENT IN GENEVA, THE RETURNING DELEGATIONS WILL FIND THE PALESTINE ISSUE HAS POPPED UP IN FRONT OF AND BEHIND THEM. I SAY TO AMERICA: YOU ARE DELUDED IF YOU THINK PEACE WOULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE ISRAELI-AMERICAN SOLUTION." HE THEN CONCLUDED THAT AMERICA

CAPABLE OF FORCING ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORY BUT OPINED THAT NO CHANGE IN US POSITION WOULD OCCUR UNTIL AMERICAN INTERESTS IN ARAB WORLD THREATENED.

6. PALESTINIAN SOURCE TOLD US PNC CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM LUNCHEDED WITH SHUQAIRY DURING LATTER'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS. FAHUM PROTEGE OF SHUQAIRY, SINCE IT SHUQAIRY WHO BROUGHT HIM INTO PLO AND EVENTUALLY ELEVATED HIM TO CHIEF OF THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, FAHUM PLEASED TO SEE SHUQAIRY BECOMING ACTIVE AGAIN IN PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS. FAHUM TOLD SOURCE THAT CURRENT FATAH-SYRIAN RELATIONS ARE MUCH IMPROVED BUT ASAD STILL HAS NOT FORGOTTEN ARAFAT'S OPPOSITION TO SYRIAN ENTRY INTO LEBANON AND RESIDUE OF DISTRUST REMAINS ON BOTH SIDES. SOURCE SPECULATED THAT SARG ACCORDED SHUQAIRY HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION IN BID TO DEVELOP COTERIE OF PALESTINIAN PERSONALITIES WHO TO SOME EXTENT, CAN COUNTER-BALANCE ARAFAT'S INFLUENCE
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IF THE NEED ARISES.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SYRIA PRESENTLY RECEIVING FATAH COOPERATION IN ITS MOVES AGAINST REJECTIONISTS IN LEBANON, SARG SEEMS TO BE CONCURRENTLY STRENGTHENING SAIQA IN ORDER PLACE IT ON MORE EQUAL FOOTING WITH FATAH WITHIN PLO. WE BELIEVE ATTENTION GIVEN TO SHUQAIRY PART OF OVERALL SYRIAN STRATEGY TO ATTEMPT TO GRADUALLY OFFSET ARAFAT'S AND FATAH'S INFLUENCE AMONG QPALESTINIANS AND DEVELOP FURTHER ASSETS AMONG PALESTINIANS WHO CAN BE CALLED UPON TO RALLY TO SYRIA'S SIDE IN EVENT OF FUTURE SYRO-FATAH CONFRONTATION. HOEVER, DISCREDITED CHARACTER SUCH AS SHUQAIRY, ESPECIALLY WHEN TAKEN WITH HIS REJECTIONIST POSTURING, SEEMS ILL-SUITED TO ADVANCE SUCH SARG GOALS.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PALESTINIANS, POLITICAL LEADERS, MEETINGS
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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TAGS: PFOR, SY, PLO, (ASAD, HAFIZ), (SHUQAIRY, HAMAD)
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